TWO SERMONS

One from *Exod.* 20. 7.

About *SWEARING*,

The other from *Rom.* 12. 16. about

CONCEITED WISEDOM;

Preached at

BURY Saint EDMUNDS

IN

SUFFOLK.

The former at the Assizes there held, *Mar.* 13. 1680.

The latter at the following Assizes, *July* 21. 1681.

LONDON,

Printed by *M. Flesher*, for *Walter Kettilby* at the *Bishop's Head* in S. *Paul's Church-yard*. 1682.

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TO

The Right Worſhipfull

John Acton,

Of *BRAMFORD*, Eſq;

High Sheriff for the County

OF

SUFFOLK.

Sir,

HOW little ſoever reaſon there was, for the paſſing of theſe Diſcourſes from the Pulpit to the Preſs; there's a great deal, I am ſure, that being thence returned, they

should be, thus, put into your hand. For now they are there, I must pray you to accept a Present made you of your own Goods, and to allow it, as some expression of that just sense I have of your Generosity and the Favours you have done,

Sir,

Ipswich,
St. Mary Tower.
Nov. 1. 1681.

Your obliged Friend

and Servant,

Jos. Cutlore.

Exodus 20. 7.

Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain.

WHEN I conſidered, that this Law is one of the Ten, which Almighty God proclaimed himſelf, out of the midſt of the fire, burning up to the midſt of Heaven, and from ſuch a ſcene of, otherwiſe terrible, Majeſty, as the World never had before or ſince; when I conſidered, that this Law is moral, and obliged therefore all, whom a rational Nature makes kindred, not the Jews onely, but Mankind; when I conſidered, that this Law forbids a Crime, that's a grand ingredient in the Nations guilt, rendring it, as much as any our other wickedneſſes, mellow and ripe for judgment; when I conſidered, that the obſervance or neglect of this Law, will greatly influence, well or ill, the preſent buſineſs of the County; in fine, when I conſidered, that the friendſhips of my own Conſcience, and men of ſenſe, (for with others I have no concern,) would be beſt ſecured, by ſpeaking things neceſſary and uſefull, and not (if I could) ingenious, ſpruce and fine; the iſſue and reſult was, that this Subject was, of right, to be treated of. To tell the plain truth, I dared to take no other: and thereupon, you ſhall have now, by God's grace, my honeſt and well-meant thoughts.

Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold, &c.

I am well aware, that as the Philoſopher ſorted all Beings, and modes of being, under ten Predicaments; to this Commandment, and the other nine, Divines have reduced all whatſoever Duties of Practical Chriſtianity; I will not ſay unfitly, ſince the Bleſſed *Jeſus* has been the Commentator, and filled them up with ſenſe, more than they had, haply, in their firſt promulgation; than they had, certainly, in the Jews Expoſition, ancient and modern. But I deſign nothing of that largeneſs: and I note it here, to ſave you the fears of a long Sermon.

This, as the other negative Precepts, has, no doubt, a poſitive meaning. All that, ſhall be waved and ſuperſeded; with ſo much of the negative alſo, as lies not fairly, and aloft, on the top of the words. The *phraſe*, the *Oriental Tranſlations*, the *Reaſon* of the words, has convinced the learned World, that they refer primarily to an Oath. And in that taking 'em, as to the *Injunction* in the firſt, and the *Sanction* of the Law, in the latter half of the Text, are theſe ſeverals.

Firſt, The *notion* of an Oath, when at all uſed; It's *a taking the name of the Lord God.*

Secondly, The *prohibition* of it, when abuſed; *Thou ſhalt not take it in vain.*

Thirdly, The *heinous offence* in doing it, implied; *He that takes it in vain is guilty.*

Fourthly, The *grievous penance* to be ſuffer'd for it, declared; *The Lord will not hold him guiltleſs.*

Of theſe in their order.

Firſt, the notion of an Oath, when at all uſed; It's a taking the name of the Lord God.

After

After Reaſon, that prerogative and glory of our Nature, our next beſt furniture is the power of Speech. For thereby we converſe; we communicate and club our other Powers; and let one another, into our heads and hearts, the Notions of our Underſtandings, the Reſolutions of our Wills. But becauſe in both we may be tempted to deceive; to profeſs in the former, contrary to our Sentiments, in the latter to our Intendments, (the Head and Heart being cloſe Cabinets, to which God onely has a ſure Key;) to give our ſelves mutual credit and aſſurance, we are fain to intereſs him, to appeal to, and invoke his Majeſty, who is omniſcient and omnipotent, *ut teſtem, ut vindicem*, to be *witneſs*, we are ſincere, and *revenger*, if we be not.

And whatever be the *phraſe* and *verbal* form, which is very, very diverſe, this is the *ratio* and *eſſential* form of an Oath; both *aſſertory* and *promiſſory*; (and all Oaths come under one or other wing of that diſtinction;) this appealing to, I ſay, and invoking of God. For I meddle not, with Oaths *Idolatrous*; *i. e.* which terminate ultimately upon a Creature; and thereby aſcribe to it, knowledge and power, proper to the Deity. The invocation of a Creature, in praying and ſwearing, being Crimes of the ſame nature; being Crimes for the ſame reaſons.

An *aſſertory* Oath, is in matters of *Fact*, things that are or have been, preſent or paſt; and calls in God for Voucher, that our *Words* really anſwer *Things*. A *promiſſory* Oath, is in matters of *Pact*, things we ingage for, for the future; and calls him in for Voucher, that *Things* ſhall really anſwer our *Words*. Whereof the firſt I would term a truth of *Certainty*, the ſecond a truth of *Honeſty*.

An Oath then, in its own nature; and duly circumſtanced, is an *Emphatical* Remonſtrance againſt *Atheiſts*, with whom God is a great nothing, and therefore ſwearing great nonſence. It proteſts moſt loudly, that *He is*; and withall does him honour, by recognition made of, and application made to, his Excellencies and Perfections. And therefore Divines generally vote, and title an Oath, an act of Worſhip; yea, they do ſo, and admit therein, when ſolemnly performed, of two ſignificant Ceremonies, *handing* and *kiſſing the Book*, who conteſt and war with our Church, for her as innocent *Three*. With what conſiſtence to themſelves, I cannot tell; nor ever will or can they.

However, upon theſe ſolid Premiſes, that an Oath thus miniſters to the glory of God, and ſerves the needs of Men, we may firmly conclude againſt *Quakers*, and others of the ſowrer ſorts of *Sectaries*; that our great Maſter *Chriſt*, and his Scholler Saint *James* have not abſolutely forbidden ſwearing: and though thoſe People be favoured by the ſound of their words, they are not by their ſenſe and meaning. Now 'tis this ever, the meaning, that is, and ſhould be deemed Scripture; and not that.

But farther, to evince our concluſion, Note, that the *Pſalmiſt*, 63. 11. by this one act, expreſſeth ſynecdochically, the whole worſhip of God; and 'twere ſtrange, ſeeing 'tis ſenior to the Legal Rites, and of moral kind, it ſhould now be a ſpecies of Iniquity. Note again, that *Iſaiah* 19. 18. and *Jeremy* 12. 16. foretelling the ſpread of the *Meſſiah's* Kingdom, and converſion of the Nations to Chriſtianity, prophecy, as one inſtance thereof, that they *ſhould ſwear by the Lord.* Note once more, that beſide the

ſwearing

ſwearing of the *Chriſtian Patriarks*, (as *Euſebius* and other Fathers would call them,) before the *Moſaick* Law, and righteous Men under it; we have Saint *Paul* under the Goſpel, that knew the heart and ſoul of *Jeſus*, ſwearing not leſs than four or five times, in thoſe Epiſtles, we all believe the dictates of the Holy Spirit of the ſame *Jeſus*. And accordingly, the innocence of an Oath, in the purer Ages of the Church was believed; and Chriſtians ſwore faith then, as *Tertullian* aſſures, to the Emperour, not onely by their God, but the health alſo of their Prince.

And this prompts a remark, not to be omitted, That in ſwearing, Gods name is taken directly and expreſly, or tacitly and by relative connotation. Oaths which mention God, are commonly *Elliptical*; and words are wanting to ſpeak their full ſenſe. *v. g.* He that ſays, *By God*, this or that, is ſo or ſo; pawns for truth of it, his intereſt in God; and muſt be ſuppoſed to ſay, If I be untrue, let God diſown me; or may I forfeit his kindneſs, and incur his diſpleaſure; or to like purpoſe. But in Oaths that mention onely ſome *Created thing*, which we value and is dear to us, as *By Heaven*, *by this Light*, *by our hand*, *by* or *upon our life* or *ſalvation*; there words are wanting, and among 'em, *God* eſpecially, to make them ſenſe at all. For we know full well, theſe things are not conſcious to, and ſo can't be witneſſes of, our veracity: and therefore God muſt be underſtood, as invoked to puniſh us in them, if deceivers; by cutting off, the kind influences of Heaven, comfort of Light, uſe of Hand, tenure of Life, title of Salvation.

And

And ſo when the Chriſtians aforeſaid ſwore *by the health* of their *Prince*, and *Joſeph* of old, *by the life of Pharaoh*; the meaning was, to depoſit in the hand of God, as pledges of Truth, the benefits, they and he could expect, from the health of the one and life of the other. And to firm this notion, that in ſuch Oaths God is concerned, and his Name taken, as was ſaid, tacitly; our Saviour's Teſtimony, which is *omni argumento majus*, is more than enough. *He that ſweareth by Heaven, ſweareth by the Throne of God, and him that ſitteth thereon*, Matth. 23. 22.

Spanhemius, (and he has grave company,) contends that an Oath by a Creature, is utterly unlawfull. If the Creature be a *Perſon*, I am; if a *Thing*, I am not of his Opinion. Not, if a *Thing*; as in the Oaths, now diſcourſed of; for God being underſtood in them, as he muſt, to give 'em ſenſe, its He, that is appealed to, and invoked, and indeed ſworn by: and ſeeing in Oaths made expreſly by God, there's a general imprecation, at leaſt, of his Anger, in caſe we be falſe; that it muſt be ſin, to ſpecify in theſe, a particular, wherein that Anger may iſſue and afflict us, I cannot comprehend.

But it's otherwiſe, if the Creature be a *Perſon*, as the *Bleſſed Virgin*, Saint *Peter*, &c. miſconceived to have excellencies more than creaturely, as inſpection of our hearts, and omnipreſency, (the Papiſts ſwearing by Saints the ſame, in *Italy*, *Turky*, *Peru*, *China*:) for then the Creature has all the Oath; and the Oath ſenſe, without reference to God; but a ſenſe, for that reaſon, idolatrous. And I need not adde, 'tis thereby illegitimated and rendred guilty. But of the notion of an Oath, thus much: Proceed we to,

Secondly,

Secondly, The prohibition of it, when abuſed: *Thou ſhalt not take it in vain.*

We take God's name in vain; when we ſwear *lightly*, or *falſely*; when of our Oaths there is *no need*, or in 'em *no truth*. For that לַשָּׁוְא, engliſh'd here, in vain is fairly applicable, to both thoſe Vanities, admits of no diſpute.

I. But what are *Light*, or *Needleſs* Oaths?

I Anſwer,

The practice of the World will preſently furniſh Inſtances, more than a good many. For are the Cards a-going? A Trump and an Oath come out together. Are the Dice at play? God muſt be a witneſs, the Throw was twice ſix. Is the Caſt of a Bowle in diſpute? A long Reed ſhall meaſure it, and ſwearing from one end of it, to the other. At our Entertainments, when they have paſt or not paſt our innocent freedoms, how oft is God made Voucher, we have obſerved, religiouſly, the laws of drinking? So Fripperies and little Jeſts are interlarded with great Oaths; and Men rake, for their very Tales, in the Wounds of *Jeſus*, and make his Bloud to run about 'em. In fine, there be thoſe, that reckon their Diſcourſe to want all *Rhetorick*, to be nothing lofty and grand, but creeping and flat; without a πλῆμαξ therein of Oaths, and its being made to ſwell and riſe, with this kind of vanity.

But this is the exceſs, and monſtrous excreſcence of it: and the Commandment forbids, not that onely, but alſo its modeſter degrees. It forbids aſſertory Oaths, in our communication and ordinary Converſes one with another: and promiſſory Oaths in our engagements one to another, if we are Volunteers, both as to ſwearing, and the thing ſworn; that is, the thing

is contingent and free, and unſworn, would not be our duty. To be ſhort, it forbids all ſwearing, that is not neceſſary, for drawing Truth out of its ſheath; or from the gravity of the Matter; or out of obedience to Superiours; or toward ſecuring the Weal-publick; or in order to ſerve the ends of Juſtice or Charity, or Religion.

And ſo, you are told the meaning of the *Law*, and our *Saviour*, in his *Swear not at all*, both together; the meaning of the Law, as improved by him, or reſcued from the *Jewiſh* gloſſes; take which you pleaſe. Our Saviour, ſpeaking *ad Populum*, ſpake popularly; not nicely and exactly: and ſo might well mean no more. But he muſt mean all I have ſaid: for the reaſon of the thing, ſome of the ſoberer *Jewiſh Doctours*, a many of the *Heathen Moraliſts*, have taught as much. I adde, 'tis as ſure he meant not leſs; as 'tis, he meant any thing at all. But to go on,

II. What are *Falſe* and *Truthleſs* Oaths?

Aſſertory Oaths are ſuch, when we aſſert the matter to be ſo, or ſo; which we know to be otherwiſe; or which may be otherwiſe, for ought we know. *Promiſſory*, when we promiſe that, whereof in ſwearing, we have no intention; or whereof after ſwearing, there's no execution. All theſe are Perjuries; *mendacia juramento firmata*, Lies made loud and *Emphatick*, by putting in the name of God. And to theſe, one or other pair of them, all Perjuries whatſoever are reducible.

To queſtion your Conceſſion, that the reſpective firſts of each pair, are Perjuries, and of the rankeſt kinds, *viz.* to aſſert upon oath, croſs to what we know, and promiſe upon oath, croſs to what we intend; would be a reproach to your Underſtandings.

The

The remaining ſeconds, with the leſs intelligent, may require a little proving.

For the one of them, then, the ſwearing that to be which for ought we know is not; 'twill appear Perjury, if it be conſidered; that whoſo ſwears a thing to be, ſwears, that it is, of his own knowledge, a knowledge proceeding from competent enquiry, to ſufficient aſſurance. If then it may not be, he has not enquired, he is not aſſured; and hath ſworn, (and therefore is forſworn,) *Gueſs* for *Knowledge*, *Poſſibility* for *Certainty*. Indeed had he ſworn only, he believed the thing to be; though it were not, he might ſwear truely; as ſwearing, not the being, but the ſeeming of it; not a thing without, but within him, to wit his own thought, whereof he cannot but be conſcious.

'Twas the old *Roman* tenderneſs, as *Tully* notes, to ſwear of what they knew undoubtedly, what they ſaw with their very eyes, not that ſo it was; but ſo they thought. But how many Chriſtians now ſwear, bogly, that to be; which they do but think; or but have a mind to think? The truth is, they ſwear by their *Wills*, more than their *Underſtandings*: and the truth is, they are forſworn.

For the other, that *non-execution* in promiſſory Oaths makes Perjury; and the Perjury may commence, though it be ſeven years, or ſeven times ſeven, after the ſwearing, twill likewiſe appear; if it be noted; that in ſuch Oaths, the execution is as much, yea more ſworn, than the intention; that being expreſt, this commonly ſuppoſed; and without that expreſſion, no Oath being, at all promiſſory, but onely aſſertory. The conſequence whereof is, that in ſuch Oaths, the execution depends not

upon the intention; yea is not leſs a man's duty, when he ſwears without, than when he ſwears with the intention of it.

So then execution there muſt be, to bar Perjury: unleſs the Parties, to whom by our ſwearing a right accrues, do releaſe us; unleſs they, who have over us greater empire, than we have our ſelves, countermand it; unleſs the matter ſworn becomes impoſſibility, and that, not of our chooſing or making; unleſs laſtly, (though not ſo, in ſwearing ſuſpected) it proves a *ſin*; a ſin I ſay, not an inconvenience, hindrance, miſchief; 'cauſe, an ought not, in morals, is equipollent to a can-not in naturals. An Hay-band may as well tie together a Faggot of flames, as an Oath be the bond of Iniquity. To take it, in an ill matter, is one great wickedneſs; to keep it, is two. And as *David* was in *Nabal*'s caſe; ſo *Herod*, might have been, in *John* the *Baptiſt*'s *pie Perjurus*.

But I haſten; and yet muſt mind you, that whereas in aſſerting Oaths, words muſt anſwer things, and in promiſſing, things anſwer words: its neceſſary, the words have a *Determinate ſenſe*: and that is ever, the eaſie, the plain, the obvious, or agreed ſenſe. The *Grecian*, that ſwore his repayment of a ſum of mony, becauſe while a-ſwearing, he gave the *Plaintiff*, his Staff, to hold, which he had hollowed, and into which he had crudden ſo much gold; and the *Romans*, who diſmiſſed by *Hannibal*, upon Oath to return, thought to ſave it and themſelves, by comeing back and then ſneaking away, privately; were never a whit the leſs perjured. *Children*, ſaid one of the Ancients, are cozened with *Nuts*; and *Men* with *Oaths*. And well they may, if to the Takers

Takers, they be as Nuts; and Nuts that have not natural, but artificial Kernel; *i. e.* a meaning which mental reſerves and equivocation, which tricks and ſophiſtry aſſign 'em. But this skill, is ſo repugnant to the reaſon and end of an Oath, making that Controverſy, which ſhould end all Controverſies; and has in't ſo many moral ills, and ſo many ill conſequences; that (whoever are his Uſhers, Romans or others,) we may boldly ſay, the Devil is thereof the great Maſter. But hitherto, of the ways, how an Oath is abuſed: ſomewhat muſt be ſaid of,

Thirdly, The heinous offence in doing it, implied: He that takes it in vain is guilty.

I. As to Light and Needleſs Oaths.

One would think, 'twere enough to make Men ſick of this Vice, and to ſhame it out of the World; that it is ſuch diſparagement to their Civility, their Credit, their Parts. For is it not very ungentile and courſe rudeneſs, by this prophaneſs, to be uneaſy to the Company, and put People to pain, who are tender of God's honour, or are, at leaſt, of the modeſter ſort of Sinners? And muſt not he deem, and recognize himſelf of poor and ſterved reputation, that's calling ever and anon, for Witneſs from Heaven, as if his Word would not go alone, in matters of ſmall moment? And what a beggarly invention does it argue, not to be able, to hold diſcourſe ſix minutes, but there muſt be gaps filled up with ſwearing? Which a Boy can doe as well as a Man; which Men then moſt doe, when leaſt men; *i. e.* fuddled with Wine or Paſſion. But for this, the Sin may offend the Sinner: wherein does it offend God?

1. Light ſwearing is great and open irreverence of God.

Between a Nit that hangs on a hair, and the higheſt Monarch upon Earth, the diſtance is not ſo wide by vaſt, by immenſe degrees, as between him and God: who is all Majeſty and Glory; above all words and thoughts, not ours, but the Angels; thoſe glittering Courtiers, that worſhip and adore, in the preſence of this great King. Now to play with, and at every turn to toſs about his glorious and fearfull Name; to concern, and give him buſineſs in our petty Affairs, our Paſtimes, our common Chat, our Drolleries, and perhaps Obſcenities, is, ſurely, to make horribly bold with him; and to proclaim, he goes with us, at a low and cheap, and vile reckoning.

2. Light ſwearing has in it fulſom and rank abſurdity.

An Oath is a grave thing; and its reaſon and nature beſpeak its uſe, onely in caſes weighty and momentous: that there may be Θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, *no introduction of God*, but on occaſions, very worthy of him. To faſten Straws by links of Iron, to dig as deep as Saint *Paul's* to found a Pageant, to bring an huge Cable to tie a Flie's Leg; are paralel Incongruities, and Germane Follies, to ſwearing upon paltry and trivial Matters.

3. Light ſwearing hath to it, little or no temptation.

To many ſins we are invited, by Appetites, that have foundation in our nature, and make towards them keen inclinations; God Almighty pleaſing, that the inſtances of duty ſhould have in them ſome difficulty; the better to expreſs our Loyalty, and render our Obedience more noble and rewardable. But this

this Sin muſt proceed from meer freak and wantonneſs: for as no profit gilds it, ſo no pleaſure makes it ſweet: (it not being, that I know of, pretented, that Oaths are *Liquoriſh*, or leave behind them hony on the Tongue.) Now this inhanceth its guilt, for a Sin to which we are leſs tempted, muſt the more participate the Will: and that muſt ever be gaged, in taking the quantity of moral Evil.

4. Light ſwearing prepares for, and eaſily paſſes into falſe.

'Tis *Philo's* note Ἐξ πολυορκίας φύεται ψευδορκία. For which reaſon, 'twas law to *Pythagoras's* Scholars, as *Hierocles* obſerves, Ὅρκον σίβεσθαι, in the Prophet's dialect to *Fear an Oath*. For as the Tongue that's always a-going, will trip oft upon a Lye; becauſe it muſt be raſh and inconſiderate: ſo for the ſame cauſe, when Oaths are in ſpeaking our frequent Parentheſes, ſome of many muſt be falſe. But farther, as *Phyſick* made familiar to the Body, little moves it, though *Doſe* and *Strength* be both augmented; ſo an Oath, (in this, like Phyſick, that it's good, onely upon juſt occaſion,) when once common, leſs affects the mind of Man: whence may iſſue a readineſs to ſwear falſely; whether the Party gives himſelf an Oath, or it be given; whether in, or out of Court; *i. e.* whether it hath, or hath not ſolemnity. And this alone would be crime enough in Light ſwearing; that 'tis apt to be pregnant with, and bring forth, ſuch a monſter. Now,

II. As to *Falſe* and *Truthleſs* Oaths.

Though I ſhould, I cannot in my ſcanty remains of time, tell the prodigies of their guilt. But take theſe ſtrictures,

1. Falſe

1. False ſwearing makes God, abetter and patron of what he hates.

Says our Lord, *The Devil is a lyar and the father of it*: and the Apoſtle, *God cannot lye*. No, in that, he is omnipotently impotent; and ſooner one thouſand times may the Sun's glorious head wear a cap of midnight darkneſs, than he doe, or favour the doing of it. But a falſe Oath puts upon God, this Brat of *Satan*, this Urchin of Hell, to be maintained and kept, at the charges of, his honour and glory. For the Lyer, has credit, more upon God's, than his own Reputation: and ſo he that is eternal Truth, is made party, yea principal, in the falſehood, and all its horrible conſequents. For,

2. False ſwearing threatens confuſion to Society.

Allegiance to the King, and his Succeſſours, is born, with all Subjects; and as faſt to them, as their Perſonality, in right, if not in fact. But to tie it yet faſter, we ſwear it; at leaſt all doe ſo, that make any figure in the publick, all that, can rebel to any purpoſe. Farther, whoever are intruſted with Offices in Church or State, take an Oath, to warrant, a motion, in their ſeveral ſpheres, not *Eccentrick*, but agreeable to the Laws. Now, if we make this bond of God, a cord of burnt flax; if we be our own Popes, and abſolve our ſelves from't; how long are we ſure of Peace, Order, Juſtice, Religion? Religion, I mean, which a man may know where to find, and what it is. There will be by and by, a *Bar of the Crown*, and another of *Niſi prius*; whereat our Quiets, our Credits, our Fortunes, our Lives will be concerned. But are any of 'em ſafe, without conſcience of an Oath? No; without that, we

may

may be robbed, and have our Throats there as ſurely cut; as on *New-market* Heath, or any other haunt of the Sons of violence. And, my Lords, the King's Judges, (that come among us twice a year, to ſcatter the kindneſs and care of the Government for our preſervation, to refreſh us with the former and the latter Rain of Juſtice,) muſt be, againſt the *Genius*, the bent, and plot of their Souls, legal Miniſters of the Iniquity. And 'cauſe falſe Oaths can doe all this and other miſchief, I reckon it the grand reaſon, though others are aſſigned, that the *True* God, has often puniſhed, and moſt ſeverely, even Perjuries by the *Untrue*.

3. Falſe ſwearing is grand *Practical*, and invites *Judicial* Atheiſm.

'Tis practical Atheiſm, when our Actions remonſtrate, and give the lye, to our loudeſt Profeſſions, There is a God. The Apoſtle calls it, the denying him in works: and can any thing doe that more, than ſwearing falſely and to wicked purpoſes, *By God*, who is eſſentially true, and hates Wickedneſs more than Hell and Devils? It's nothing ſtrange, if Men, whoſe guilt this is, paſs on to the other Atheiſm, and disbelieve a God, in their own defence, ſo oft deſpiſed, ſo much provoked. However, others, who would fain have none, and are undone if one there be, will preſume the disbelief; and thence ſhall their Atheiſm, or Commence, or be confirmed. And 'tis a queſtion, which in our Age hath more promoted it, the Perjuries of the late times, coloured with Religion, or the Writings of the Devil's Secretary, the man of *Malmsbury*.

4. Falſe

4. False ſwearing at once affronts and dares the Almighty.

Daring, we ſay, makes Cowards fight. This is ſure, that mixing an abuſe, with ſcorn of its reſentment, will move the moſt gentle and ſoftly tempers, and indanger the putting into paſſion meekneſs it ſelf. Now the falſe Swearer does this even to the Almighty; he ſays in effect, Let God own my Lyes, or ſhew his Angers; countenance that, or diſcountenance me. Which is, ſuch a twiſt of horrible baſeneſs and impudence, as muſt make his Crime the firſt-born of Abomination; and intitle it, to chaſtiſement, not from the Whips, but Scorpions, and greateſt Stingers too, of Divine Juſtice. The methods and opportunities of punishment God will chooſe; but his Revenges upon this guilt are certain: as appears by,

Fourthly, The grievous penance to be ſuffer'd for't, declared; *The Lord will not hold him guiltleſs.*

Of which a word or two; and I have done. To hold guiltleſs, is to excuſe and indemnify; but here's a μείωσις in the phraſe, which makes an ἔυξησις in the ſenſe; and the meaning is, God will, (however the Sinner may eſcape with men,) ſeverely exact this guilt, and puniſh it condignly. He will doe ſo, whoſe Angers are armed with Omnipotency; and with whom to think, to ſay and to doe, are the ſame; equally facile and eaſy. He will doe ſo, whom we can no more reſiſt, than a ſhadow can brave the Sun; and from whom we cannot fly, or hide any where, but in the Lap and Womb of nothing; if there alſo he may not find us, who made that Womb once pregnant, and delivered of a World.

What

What then may not the guilty fear, ſo expoſed, ſo obnoxious? To be curſed in his Family; to be mothed and blaſted in his Eſtate; to have God's Judgments enter and make their dwelling, in all he is, his Parts, Powers and Faculties. But theſe are but prelibations, little ſips at the cup of wrath, whereof he muſt drink (however go his Fortunes here,) on the farther ſide of the Grave: a cup that is an eternity to the bottom, and wherein are all the mighty ills, the malice of a Devil can wiſh there. The ſame word which with the Greeks ſignifies an Oath, the Latines have made the name of that place which avenges the ſins of this life. 'Twere well, if Men wou'd doe, what was meant by't, fright themſelves, from the guilt of the Text, by proſpect into that ſcene of ſorrows; where miſery dwels for ever, with utter excluſion of mercy; where Calamities are ſuffer'd bigger than all patience, without one poor thought to refreſh, that the evil portion, ſhall either abate or terminate.

Conſider this, and be afraid and repent, ye vain, and you, the greater Criminals, Falſe ſwearers; eſpecially when with ſolemnity, God's Book in hand, or at the lip, that forbids and threatens it. Conſider it, you Prevaricators, in whatever truſt you enter by an Oath, whether *Civil* or *Eccleſiaſtick*. Conſider it, you *Omnia bene*-men, that make preſentments, as if in Heaven, among Angels and Saints, where nothing is amiſs. Conſider it, you Witneſſes, that clip or label Evidence, and tell the Dictates, of ſpight, or kindneſs, more than truth. Conſider it, you Jurors, reſolved beforehand, to find, as Faction or Intereſt moves; againſt the Parſon ever, and Lord of the Mannor.

It's the monſtrous profaneſs of ſome to bid, ever and anon, God damn 'em. A few deep thoughts of the horrible meaning of that monoſyllable, would cure 'em of't, for ever. But know this, that thoſe words in the publick form of an Oath, So help you God, you make of the ſame importance: your falſeneſs turns 'em into a curſe, of God's ſhewing you no mercy, when a dying; giving you no abſolution, when a judging, at the Bar of the great and laſt Aſſizes. This you'll ſay, is ſevere plainneſs. 'Tis ſo; but proceeds, God is my witneſs, (that's an Oath, I grant, and thereupon I expect to find credit with you;) it proceeds, I ſay, from meer Charity, and a care of your Souls, and thereby of my own. But be that, as it will; to demonſtrate the Premiſſes, all full of reaſon; I require but two *poſtulatums*; One, that *God* indeed *is*; the other, that this is his Commandment. *Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, &c.*

Rom.

Rom. 12. 6.

----Be not wiſe in your own conceit.

'TIS ſometimes made a *problem*. Which is better, to be a *Fool*, or a *Knave*? I anſwer, if they be both *a dying*, the former a thouſand times. For the Fool's want of underſtanding muſt plead for him before God, make his caſe pitiable, and his fortunes, I believe, much the ſame, with thoſe of Infants, who depart before actual ſin, and ſhall dwell upon the Skirts of Paradiſe, the utmoſt Margent of the State of Glory: whereas the Knaves perverſity, in debauching a quick Apprehenſion and abuſing it to vile purpoſes, is like to doe horrible and everlaſting Penances.

But ſuppoſe the Parties to live; and there's temptation to chooſe the latter. For the defect in the Fools *head* is incurable; but in the Knaves *heart* not ſo. Many that were cunning and wicked, have liſtned to God and Reaſon; and become prudent and pious, diſcreet and devout. But Fools cannot underſtand their language; much leſs edify by it to any degree of vertue. Well, but though the ſtate of a Fool be ſo wretched, there's a third Perſon, who is, if we credit the Holy Ghoſt more wretched; *viz.* the *Wiſe in his own conceit*. Prov. 26. 12. *Seeſt thou a man wiſe in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool, than of him.* This ſort of wiſedom then, being ſo miſchievous to its Subject; and ſeeing there

was never more of't in the World, and more miſchief it never did, than it has, and is ſtill a-doing, in the preſent Age; it cannot be improper to conſider this charitable counſel of the Apoſtle;

Be not wiſe in your own conceit.

Where are three things to be accompted for.

I. What *Wiſedom* in *it ſelf* is.

II. What *Wiſedom* in *conceit.*

III. What be the *evil conſequences* thereof.

I. What Wiſedom in it ſelf is.

And here note, that in this diſſuaſion from conceited, Saint *Paul* beſpeaks our regard for the real Wiſedom. As he who induſtriouſly cautions others againſt Cheats by falſe Gold and ſpurious Diamonds, intimates enough the inviting value and worth of 'em, when true and ſincere.

Note again, that by Wiſedom, as we now diſcourſe, and the Apoſtle here takes it, is not meant that notion thereof, though frequent enough in Scripture, wherein to be wiſe and to be good, is all one; Wiſedom being then put for all Vertue, and oppoſed to Folly, as likewiſe put for all Vice and Sin. No, but we are to underſtand it, in a reſtrained ſenſe, as importing a Vertue or power intellectual, or in one word Knowledge: and that as it conducts us in our moral Motions, and with reſpect to God and the things of Religion.

And I reckon as to this reſtriction, no wiſe Man will contend with me; it being enough evident, to all who underſtand Saint *Paul's* writings, that here and very oft elſewhere he ſpeaks with reflexion on the *Gnoſticks*; a ſort of Hereticks, pretending to be the great *Knowers*, as the name ſignifies; but were indeed the contrary: and withall a foul and rotten

gene-

generation of men, at once the ſcandal and plague of the firſt Plantations of Chriſtianity. But having noticed thus much, proceed we to anſwer the firſt enquiry by theſe three Particulars.

1. Wiſedom in it ſelf, imports *conſiderable meaſures of Knowledge.*

He that knows one or two things or ſo, can't be thence denominated wiſe: as no man calls half a dozen Bees a ſwarm; or a Pye's Neſt, a handfull of ſticks ſet on flame, a bone-fire; or a few melancholy Shillings in a Purſe, a Treaſure or Exchequer. Wiſedom ſpeaks an Underſtanding well laid in, with a ſtock of Knowledge; an Head wherein is a mighty crowd of Notions; a Mind whoſe eye hath ſurveyed and contemplated numerous objects and points of religious Learning and Inſtruction. And 'tis rank arrogance for any man to claim a title to't, that has not ſhaked the Tree of Knowledge, and gather'd the Fruits not of this and that, but many of its Branches; in ſhort, that has not travelled, and is not well verſt, to uſe my Lord *Verulam*'s words, in the *World intellectual.*

2. It imports this Knowledge *in matters of greateſt moment.*

That, as to Faith, it be in particulars moſt neceſſary, explicitly to be believed: and as to Practice, in thoſe that ſerve moſt, and are of greateſt uſe, to influence and govern our hearts and our lives. Thoſe, I ſay, that will make our Conſciences and Converſations *Orthodox*; that integrate the indiſpenſable duty we owe God and Man; the duty of our proper Places and Circumſtances, and the ſeveral reſpective relations we ſtand in one towards another.

A great

A great many fall out fiercely about that, which, whether it be or no, is no concern of Religion; or if the matter of conteſt be of greater conſequence, they diſpute eagerly and to the loſs of all Charity, about the term or the phraſe, it ſhall be expreſt by. But none of theſe ſhall be the acquaintance of him that is wiſe. He hath no appetite or taſte for their learned nothings; nor ſhall his eyes be afflicted with the angry duſt, they raiſe about 'em. He knows plenty of nobler Objects, that will better entertain and reward his ſtudy and meditation. In ſum, he labours to have skill in Practical Chriſtianity, that he may be his own Caſuiſt, and upon all occaſions momentous, know what to doe; and ſo doe it boldly, and with holy confidence; and not need to boggle and demur, or paſs into actions with a trembling and uncertain foot. Should a Pilot, being to ſteer ſome rich *Cargo* to a *Northern* Port, ſtudy onely the motion of Stars that ſhine to none but *Southern* People; he were a fool: for all that learning ſignifies nothing as to his end. And can it be wiſedom then to ſpill our buſie zeals upon matters, wherein our chief end or happineſs is no way concerned, and that nothing tend to the putting thoſe precious Souls of ours into their haven of immortal reſt and tranquility. No ſurely.

3. It imports *ability or ſufficiency for extending knowledge*, or, *making a judgment upon any new matter.*

This ability in our wiſe Man to conclude rationally and diſcreetly, upon any thing, he hath occaſion to conſider of, may be argued from the two preceding Particulars: but ſome qualities belong to his character, that farther prove it: *viz.* That he has patience of conſidering what arguments offer, for

for the affirmative or negative in any propoſition; that loving truth for her own ſake, he will weigh them juſtly and without prejudice; in fine, that there's with him great ſagacity for ſeeing through the diſguiſes and maſquerade, whereby error gains the ſhew and appearances of truth.

Jupiter as the old *Greeks* fable, looking from Heaven, and ſeeing the zealous quarrels that were about Truth, to ſave her from being pulled in pieces, ordered *Mercury* to dreſs up Error, in the habit and garb of Truth: and hence, ſay they, moſt men, ever ſince, fight, and are as pugnacious, for the falſe Quean, as they were, before, for the true Miſtreſs. Well, the ſagacity of the wiſe generally ſaves 'em ſuch miſadventures; but if Errors dreſſery be ſo artificial, as to impoſe on them alſo, yet the entertainment they give her, is conditional; and ſhe is turned out of their embraces, upon the leaſt notice of the miſtake. For nothing is more their property, than to be ſoft and yielding to conviction: when Fools are *fond* and *obſtinate*, in their deluſions. But paſs we now to the,

II. What conceited Wiſedom is.

Why 'tis Ignorance and Confidence bound together in one Volume; a ſtrong belief, the Underſtanding is pregnant with generous notions, when all is tympany and wind; a man's reckoning himſelf very knowing and judicious, and being to his own ſeeming an *Argus*, ſtuck round about with eyes; when really he has but poor two, and them bleered, and with which he rather ſtares than ſees. I mean his apprehenſions of things are inadequate and ſhort, unexact and indigeſted, wild, unſteddy and extravagant.

The

The *Mahometans* have a ſaying among 'em, That he who will have happineſs, muſt aſcend to it by the ſteps of 50 ſciences. This is a lye, and the Ladder hath a very mercifull ſhortneſs: however the Party we are ſpeaking of dreams, he is at the top; when in truth, he is not over cleaverly the ſecond or the firſt round.

But to treat of this matter more edifyingly, I ſhall give ſeveral particulars; wherein you ſhall find as many inſtances or cauſes of this conceited Wiſedom.

1. That Wiſedom is, or may be conceited onely, *when the knowledge pretended to, is reſolved ultimately into education.*

It's a bleſſing in our childhood to be nurſed with the ſincere Milk, as Saint *Peter* ſpeaks, of the word: and to have principles of truth then dropt and inſtilled into us, to be well ſeaſoned with wholſome and ſavoury Inſtructions, is, no doubt, an happy preoccupation and prejudice againſt Errors and falſe Doctrines. For what is ſaid of the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, the Coat that fitted an *Hebrew* Child, grew with him, and fitted him when a Man; and what we all experiment in our own Skins, which are the ſame to us, Infants and Adult, ſave onely the new quantity; holds good for the more part, as to the Opinions, wherewith the Soul hath its early inveſtment.

But yet to make this *Orthodoxy* commendable, moral and a Vertue, we muſt, when at age and diſcretion, firſt ſearch, and then find, that Reaſon and Revelation vouch and confirm, what a Parent or Maſter or Prieſt, dictated, when we were no Criticks, and believed all they ſaid, infinitely. For Education

is

is a contingent thing; and may and does as well teach *Quakeriſm* and *Popery*, yea *Judaiſm* and *Turciſm*, as the right and ſound Faith.

Now whereas, if it be wrong, it claſps a man up; and makes the entries and admiſſions of Truth, as uneaſy and difficult; as it does of Error, if it be right; ſee therefore, O man, thou eſpecially that reckoneſt thy ſelf wiſer than the Church and the Laws, ſee I ſay, whether thy confidence be not the product of thy Education; which though it gives us Opinions, can never prove them, and be their demonſtration. If thou wert never yet man enough to demur to, or call in queſtion and examine, what was learnt at School and thy Mothers houſe; poſſibly thy gold may be tinſel and cheap finery, I mean thy precious Truths vile Errors.

2. *When we argue from Perſons to Things*; and *Opinions are owned and reprobated for their reſpective Profeſſors.*

The ſeat of Religion and Godlineſs is the Heart, more than the Head; the Will than the Underſtaning. And therefore to hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs, is a very poſſible ſin. A bad man may bring very good Arguments; and the concluſion muſt iſſue, not by his *Ethicks*, but his *Logicks*. Hence our Saviour, ſpeaking to his Diſciples, of the *Phariſees*, Matth. 23. 2. What, ſays he, they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and doe; but doe not after their works. They had a Jewel, as the fouleſt Toads have, in their heads; and were rich there, though vile every where elſe. The Sermon then may be all ſound, and the truth of God, though the Preachers life do confute it, what it can, all the week after. Though indeed ſuch Preachers joyn with the

Devil, in a great Temptation, and are like with him to have their portion.

But if a Preacher or an Authour is become dear to us, eſpecially by a reputation of great ſanctity; we are apt to think, they can hardly erre; we hang upon their Lips; all they ſpeak is Oracle, and from them we take our whole ſet or gang of Articles and Perſwaſions. But thus it ought not to be; for it would be enquired, whether this holineſs be hearty and not ſuperficial and dwelling upon the skin; whether it be entire, and go quite through the man, and not partial and made up of a certain ſort of Vertues, that give him a gloſs, and ſerve to blanch ſome Vices of the ſpiritual kind, as inconſiſtent with holineſs, as thoſe which are groſs and ſcandalous. And then it muſt be noted, that be the holineſs what it will or can, 'tis ſurely no antidote againſt all Error. For the Ancients have obſerved, that ſeveral great Hereſies, were broached by famed examples of Piety. And 'twas this indeed, that made 'em ſpread, and propagated the infection; it being like giving Poiſon in a Cordial, whereby the Veins become greedy of and with eagerneſs ſuck in their miſchief.

But ſuppoſe, that Truth muſt go by the vote of the holy and the good; ſurely care ſhould be taken, that we Poll honeſtly. Haply, there are a many, very many more, diſcreetly, ſincerely and ſolidly pious, againſt, than for thy Opinions; if not at home, yet abroad; if not in this, yet in preceding Ages. Haply, the whole Church of God, in the days of its Virgin purity, when it bred ſo many myriads of Martyrs and Confeſſors, which held for above three hundred years after *Chriſt*, is againſt 'em. For ſo it is, I pawn my Soul for't, be thou either Papiſt or Sectary.

Sectary. Now methinks 'tis ſomething bold, to reckon our ſelves wiſe, if the reckoning cannot hold; unleſs thoſe Saints were fools, who were ſo neer the fountains of Truth, who lived it ſo exactly, and ſealed it ſo cheerfully with their bloud. However this boldneſs does loſe thee, the reaſon of thy confidence: for if they who were ſo greatly holy, ſo many holy, did erre: then why not thou, and thoſe thou relieſt on, that have thy faith upon their ſleeves, little Popes of thy own making, thy few and leſs-holy?

3. *When we conſider not the ſcantling, nor ſoberly and juſtly take the gage and meaſure of our abilities, natural or acquired.*

Nature hath given us all, eyes; though with great difference as to the power of ſeeing: and Art hath ſuperadded great helps, by Glaſſes, thoſe eſpecially, which by magnifying the Object, may be two or three thouſand times, leſſen in effect its diſtance, and bring us nearer to it, by ſo many degrees. And hence the milky way, that goes croſs the Heavens, taken formerly for a bright Cloud, is now found paved all along with Stars.

Semblably, all of us have an underſtanding, and knowing Powers, though ſome in greater, ſome in leſs meaſure; and this the Book of God doth ſuppoſe, and proceeds upon that ſuppoſal. But theſe may be, and are aſſiſted mightily, by *Learning, skill in Logick, Knowledge of the Tongues*, the *Idiom of the Scriptures*, the *Cuſtoms and Hiſtory of the times they were written in*, the *Expoſition of the Fathers*, the *Analogy of received Doctrines*, &c.

Now haſt thou no bright Head, no keen and piercing Underſtanding? nor this brought to an edge,

and ſharpned by the particulars now mentioned? What impudence then, is it for thee, ſo unprovided, to judge bogly of all Controverſies and Caſes of Conſcience; to give us Schemes of *God's Decrees*; to tell us his Heart and the Riddles of his Providence; and to name no more, to expound *Daniel* and the *Revelations*, and thoſe portions of holy Writ, whereon dwells Θεον σκότος, a *Divine Darkneſs!* Keep in the name of God and Reaſon, to ſome honeſt *Catechiſe* and *Tracts of Devotion*; and deal in *thoſe Scriptures*, which plainly declare the *great Articles of Faith*, and *Rules of Practice*; for thoſe thou wilt find in God's Book, and principally intended for thee: the ſhallows of that ſtream of Truth, where, as the Father ſpeaks, a *Lamb may wade*; whereas in its deeps an *Elephant may ſwim*, aye and drown. The Spider, as the Fable hath it, was angry with the Swallow, and ran out her little Nets, to catch and be revenged of her enemy. But when it came to; both Weaver and Web were carried aloft into the Aire. So indeed thou medleſt with matters, for which, thy Tackling has neither ſtrength nor fitneſs; however thou mayſt pride thy ſelf, in taking Flies, the petty fancies and dogma's of Sects, which buz and make a noiſe in the World.

4. *When we take not ſtrict care, that our Concluſions be no bigger than their Premiſſes; the Mediums or proofs that argue them.*

When the Argument is a dwarf, and the Inference a Giant; when a Tit or Wren is made to lay an Eſtridge Egg, as big as ones head; the knowledge may well be turgid and puffy and ſeem a great huge thing; when indeed it's lean and ſterved, and almoſt a very nothing.

Thou

Thou haſt a proof for thy Perſwaſion from Reaſon; but does it come home to and inforce the thing in controverſie? See if 'tis not a begging the matter in queſtion; if 'tis not a particular to conclude a general; if 'tis not *ignotum per ignotius*, and carries us farther into the dark to judge of Colours. Thou haſt another from Scripture: but haſt thou not the ſound without the ſenſe; does not the *Text* as thou takeſt it, ſignify all it can, not what it means? does it not, as preſt to thy ſervice, fight and quarrel with the *Context*, and other places muſt *lie* that this may ſpeak on thy ſide?

Thus the late *Gnoſticks* among us, in ſpight of the 13*th* of the *Romans* and a thouſand other Texts, debauched, the 149 *Pſalm* that ſpeaks the Conqueſts of *Iſrael* over the Heathen Neighbour Princes, to countenance the murther, of their own Sovereign; and I have ſeen the Book, wherein the horrid barbariſms acted, on that bleſſed *Martyr*, were pretended, to be clearly foretold by the Prophet *Daniel*. Which is juſt the Pope's expoſition of *Geneſis* 1. 16. *God made two Lights, a greater and a leſs*; and *John* 21. 16. *Chriſt* ſaid, *Peter feed my ſheep. Ergo*, the Pope is above Emperours and Kings, and may depoſe and order 'em to be ſlain. But this is to make the Bible, the worſt book in the World, by giving that ſo bad a meaning, that has ſo great an authority.

And the like abuſe of Scripture, though not ſo vile and abominable may be met with, in other matters, the Doctrines of *Chriſt*'s Death, Juſtification, Grace, &c. but to preach and write Divinity in ſuch ſort, is to doe like the Poets; who will plant rare Paradiſes and reer Palaces for Princes and crowned Heads, yea the Sun himſelf, and all this with no other coſt, but words and fancy.

5. *When*

5. When our Notions are ſetled, and we determine and judge of things more by our Wills than our Underſtandings.

It was the ſtomach of the Wolf, that made him ſpell *Agnus*, whatever letters he was to put together. And when the Will ſays to the Underſtanding, as the fellow did to the Prieſt, when he went to him with his caſe of Conſcience, Good Sir, make it as lawfull as you can; the vote of Underſtanding and Will, are like to be the ſame.

This was it, that Blinded the *Phariſees*, men otherwiſe of parts and learning; whoſe objections againſt our Lord's Doctrine, lay wholly in their Luſts and unhallowed Appetites: but for which his Divine Philoſophy had appeared all demonſtration, and written, as the *Egyptians* ſay of their *Hyeroglyphicks*, with the Fingers of the Sun. And as then, ſo in all times before and ſince, weak and feeble premiſſes, have prevailed for concluding on that ſide of the Queſtion, for which men have had the greater kindneſs: and the Will hath been, is and will be a mighty Pope and the great Judge of Controverſies. The Pope himſelf and his Partizans, believe their Chair infallible: becauſe 'tis a rare piece of Houſhold-ſtuff; becauſe the Seat of a mighty Monarchy, and more glorious and auguſt than any other earthly Throne. And there's no Argument ſo potent to make 'em Proſelites, as that which attaques, mens Wills; their eaſy aſſuring Salvation to the looſe and vicious.

And 'tis by the Candle of the Heart, as the *Perſians* entitle a famed Book of theirs, that ſo much ill is ſeen in the Office of *Biſhops*; for the authority whereof there's equal evidence with that for the *Lord's day*, the *baptiſm of Infants*, and the *Canon of the*

the Scripture. By the ſame Candle alſo, *ſtated Forms of Prayer* are diſcovered unlawfull; for which Antiquity ſpeaks ſo loud; for which there is ſuch a world of reaſon; and againſt which, God's Word, has no anger but a deal of kindneſs.

Farther, but for this Light, the *Rubrick of our Service*, would, though made by Men, look as innocent to ſome Perſons, as their own *Directory*, which ſure was not the work of God or Angels; as innocent as the *Jews Synagogue Worſhip*, for which it muſt be great cunning to find one word in Scripture. And they would never contend that Diſcipline now and all Rites, muſt be the ſame with practice Apoſtolical; being ſelf-condemned, in not requiring their *Women to be veiled* in religious Aſſemblies, not having *Women Deacons*, *Community of goods*, *Abſtinence from bloud*, *Feaſts of love*, *the Lord's day-charities*, *the Holy kiß*, *Anoynting the ſick*, *Dipping in baptiſm*, &c.

Alas, had we an honeſt indifferency, on which ſide to find the truth, as well againſt us, as for us; and were freed from the charms and witcheries of ſingularity, intereſt, gain, glory, &c. and did with equal candor and impreſſibleneſs reade the Writers for our Church and their oppoſites; our Contentions would all expire and dye, in the boſome of Peace. But while men are three-quarters Will; and ſo little in the uſe of an impartial Underſtanding; this happineſs, to the joy of *Papiſts*, and ſorrow of *wiſe Proteſtants* cannot be hoped for.

6. *When we arrogate and pretend to the immediate ſuggeſtions and the promptings of God's holy Spirit.*

This pretence is equally precarious, vain and idle; whether in praying or preaching, or expounding the Scripture, or judging of any point of Chriſtian Doc-

trine:

trine: and that idle it is, in 'em all, may be evidenced by this heap of Arguments.

1. It is remonſtrance to the ſufficiency of the Scripture; and makes to it new labels and appendages; and by conſequence, as well as the *Roman* definition, new Articles of Faith.

2. We have of the Spirit, in this ſenſe, as no promiſe from God, ſo no real need, no juſt neceſſity; upon which reaſon, the *Montaniſts* making the ſame pretence, were 1500 years ago, condemned Fanaticks by the Church.

3. Pretenders to the Spirit, bring of it no miraculous Proofs, or other Voucher; which God ever ſuperadded to the gift of the Spirit, that its dictates might be revered, and not be reckoned humane or common talk.

4. They can't tell when they have the Spirit, and when not. Which the truly inſpired could. Witneſs Saint *Paul*, who could ſay, I command, yet not I, but the Lord; and again, This ſay I, not the Lord, as knowing, when he gave the Oracles of God, when the Counſels of a Man.

5. They differ and agree not among themſelves: as we ſay of Popes, they have infallibly contradicted one another. Now the Spirit can no more diſagree, with it ſelf, than Peace fight with, or Truth give, it ſelf the lye.

6. They have *de facto* deceived us. For ſuch things have been vented under this glorious pretence; which all wiſe men are as ſure, that they came not from God, as they are ſure that there is a God: things that would argue the holy Spirit, not a ſweet Dove, but a croaking Raven, or bloudy Vulture.

How

7. How will they prove, what they call the Spirit, not to be hot Fancy, a blaſt from the *Hypocondria*, Melancholy, or the Spleen? Which if they can't, and yet require credit; then any *Fungus* may ariſe from the belly of mud and darkneſs, and nouriſh a Glo-worm, that ſhall challenge to outſhine all the Luminaries, that lighted People hitherto into Heaven, and glory. So then, though we have, God be thanked, his holy Spirit to bleſs our ſober and well order'd ſtudies, in the knowledge of his Will; and to enable us, when 'tis known, to perform it; yet they who pretend to the promptings aforeſaid, and thereby to be wiſer than their Neighbours, may be wiſe onely in conceit.

But ſo much for our ſecond general, what conceited Wiſedom is; ſomewhat muſt be ſaid of the

III. What be the evil conſequences thereof.

1. *It's the rank principle and parent of Error.*

The men of *Rome* have ſuch foul Errors, as I truſt in God my ſelf and many thouſands of my Brethren, would rather beg and die, than *ſubſcribe* to, for *all the talk* of *Maſquerade*. And there's nothing, they are more oweing to, than their deafneſs to the advice in the Text; advice thruſt in here and there, in the Epiſtle, 'cauſe the *Romans*, as Saint *Chryſoſtome* notes, were haughty and apt to ſwell with vain imaginations.

And there hath been, and is among our ſelves a lurry and litter of monſtrous *Dogma's*; and what Dam come they all from, but Self-conceit? 'Tis fabled of *Latona*, that labouring of Twins, and *Diana* one of 'em being born, ſhe became Midwife to her Mother, for bringing forth *Apollo*. But 'tis a ſad truth, that this falſe Wiſedom, being delivered of one Error, is

often thereby both help'd and impregnated for production of many more.

2. *It makes them, that are therewith poſſeſſed to be unteachable.*

Say the Jews, *Ancilla vidit*, &c. a Girle ſaw at the Red Sea and at Mount *Sinai*, more than all the Prophets put together. And let one of our Females but have this tympany, and ſhe ſhall ſeem to her ſelf, as come from thence. For ſhould any the graveſt Doctour, accoſt her with Arguments never ſo ſolid and ſtrong, and with the nobleſt and moſt convincing Divinity; he ſhall be anſwer'd with Cant, and termed perhaps, by way of proud pitty, a poor wretch, and having nothing in him, but carnal reaſon, and wiſedom of the fleſh.

3. *It quite ſpoils Conſcience, and corrupts all its Offices and Operations.*

Whatever gay *Epithets*, and auguſt Titles we give our Conſciences; Conſcience is nothing elſe, more or leſs, but the Mind or Underſtanding of a Man, conſidered abſtractly, with reference to God and the things of Religion. If then our Wiſedom be conceited, ſo alſo will our Conſcience; and its dictates, counſels, checks, rebukes, peace and comforts, all alſo conceited; When they kill you, ſaid our Lord to the Apoſtles, they ſhall think they ſerve God, *i. e.* they ſhall doe ſo out of conſcience. So where the Inquiſition, that emblem of Hell, obtaines, the Proteſtant burns, and *Papiſts* kindle the fires out of conſcience. And indeed *Papiſts*, *Turks*, *Jews*, *Pagans*, *Atheiſts*, are what they are out of conſcience.

4. *This is that, which raſſles Order and Peace, and is the great foe and enemy of Government.*

Government is that to Bodies Politick, that Health

is

is to the Natural: and without that, they muſt grow feeble and crazy, and at laſt languiſh and expire in chaos and confuſion; which is their death and diſſolution. Now that the Vice we are ſpeaking of is perilous to Government, the whole World is full of Inſtances: and we have had of it, among our ſelves, enough of all Conſcience. For from whence iſſued thoſe Brats of Hell, the Powder Plot, and others of the Men of the Red Letter; and the late Rebellion of the Men moſtly of no Letters, not to name others, but from this falſe conception of Wiſedom? It ſeems a little Vice, a Cloud no bigger at firſt than a Man's hand; but it has often grown into a darkneſs overſpreading the whole Sky, and made the Air black with ſin and miſery.

5. As 'tis cauſe of trouble in this, ſo alſo may it be of torments in the next World. For when God ſhall come to judge us, and give us our laſting fates; he will paſs ſentence upon our matters, not by the words we call 'em by, or the notions we have of 'em; but as they are in truth and reality; and as had we not been conceited and proud, but liſtned to God and Reaſon, we might have underſtood 'em. You will all grant, the killing our Lord *Jeſus*, by the Jews was damnable, and yet they perſwaded themſelves, by Arguments and a *Logick* of this Wiſedoms teaching, they were in it, zealous onely for *God* and *Moſes*.

So that People are concerned, not onely to have Conſcience, for what they doe; but alſo a right Conſcience: and otherwiſe they may, here juſtly find inconvenience, and hereafter damnation, for their Conſcience.

But I muſt end all, and 'tis with an humble re-

queſt, in behalf of your Orator; and 'tis this, That right may be done him, *i. e.* that what hath been ſaid, may be aſcribed, not to falſe Cauſes, as *intereſt, anger, any peeviſh* or *waſpiſh humour*; *but care of the publick tranquillity, Love of the Truth*, and a *Zeal for Religion*, and the *Weal of Souls*; for theſe, and ſo let God have mercy upon my Soul, are the true, &c.

THE END.

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